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ABSTRACT

Discipline concerns have consistently been ranked in the top 10 of the most serious problems facing public schools. Discipline problems were examined in 12 urban and rural middle and junior high schools in Utah. For each discipline referral over a 5-week period, a standardized student referral form was completed that documented action taken by the administrator, the specific policy followed to resolve the situation, and the approximate time spent with the incident. Results indicate that small rural schools and large urban schools differed significantly with regard to the number, type, frequency, and seriousness of incidents; time required for reaching a resolution to the problem; and the repetitive nature of discipline referrals. For example, 2,245 separate discipline referrals were reported during the 5-week period in the urban schools, 25 referrals for every 100 students. In contrast, there were only 16 referrals for every 100 students in the rural schools. However, rural schools reported more problems with classroom disruption and fighting, while urban schools reported more problems with tardiness. In addition, rural schools initiated more calls to parents, set up more conferences with administrators and teachers, and contacted police and county authorities more frequently than urban schools. Data also indicate that urban teachers initiated discipline referrals far more frequently than rural teachers. Appendix includes referral form and results. (LP)

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Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Rural and Urban Junior High Schools

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Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Rural and Urban Junior High Schools

by

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Whether viewed from an organizational or a social perspective, education has traditionally faced difficult challenges. This is particularly true in the context of recent trends concerning problems in schools throughout the United States. A review of the annual Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll conducted over the past years identifies discipline in schools as a major public concern. This poll, conducted on an annual basis, provides an in-depth exploration of a number of significant national educational issues relating to public awareness of concerns relating to education.

Over a period of ten years, community and parental perceptions of the most serious problems facing schools include what they perceive as a lack of discipline in the public schools. These concerns, relating to discipline, include such issues as fighting, violence and gangs, the use of drugs, student lack of respect for teachers and others, lack of pupil interest, truancy, drinking and alcoholism. During the past decade, this lack of discipline, and other concerns relating to discipline in the schools, have consistently been ranked in the top ten of the most serious problems facing local public schools. Over that ten year period (1987-1996), the perceived lack of discipline averaged second in importance.

Discipline is an extremely multifaceted endeavor requiring both proactive and reactive elements that are in constant motion in any school setting. From the outset, it was recognized that this study would barely

scratch the surface of such a complicated and difficult concern. As the study evolved, however, the data collected served to reinforce this realization because of the multitude of unanswered questions that arose that had to be pursued further. During the beginning of data analysis, for instance, It was observed that the amount of time spend on both proactive and reactive discipline procedures require an enormous amount of time and energy of school leaders.

When one realizes that an administrator presence is required in all areas of significant student traffic in order to maintain student control (i.e. bus loading and unloading, hall duty before and after school as well as during student passage between classes, lunch rooms and other areas where students gather), this time element becomes a significant factor. School leaders involved in the study, and who were interviewed, expressed a strong preference for prevention of problems by walking around and establishing a physical presence in areas of concern. From such demands it is easy to see why administrators spend approximately two-and-one-half hours each day in proactive discipline.

Rosen (1992) pointed to a lack of self control, poor role models, need for approval and attention as contributing reasons for increased discipline problems. Regardless of the causes, it is apparent that school administrators spend a great deal of time dealing with students who violate school rules and policy, or who simply do not conform to accepted social norms. Numerous factors such as compulsory school attendance laws, student interest, legislated length of school days, and the climate of the school all influence student behavior and learning. Because of these, and other factors, discipline in the schools remains a major contributor to the loss of learning time in schools (Cabinet council on Human Resources, 1984; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). These, and other reports, indicate that the

influence of disorder resulting from discipline problems in public school is a fundamental barrier to academic achievement. Poor discipline in any school environment inhibits the learning of offending students who are continually removed from classrooms, as well as non-offenders whose learning is interrupted when a teachers is forced to take steps necessary to bring disruptive students under control.

Recognizing this educational dilemma, researchers at Brigham Young University applied for, and received a grant from the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) for the purpose of:

1. determining the nature, treatment and disposition of discipline referrals in selected middle and junior high schools throughout Utah;
2. creating a summary profile of student disciplinary occurrences that noted and defined the disposition of problems reported over a five-week period; and
3. determining recommendations designed to assist administrators to more effectively utilize time spent with discipline referrals.

When the study was first designed, six large middle or junior high schools were selected to participate in the research. It was then decided to include six small rural schools to determine whether there would be differences between the number and frequency of referrals, the percentage and types of referrals, as well as the depth and seriousness of discipline concerns over a five week period.

A standardized student referral form was designed for use in each of the twelve schools selected for the study. This form (See transparency copies enclosed) was completed for each discipline referral over a twenty-five school day period of time, and documented information concerning: action taken by the administrator to resolve a discipline concern; the specific policy followed

to resolve the situation; and the approximate time spent with the incident. Reasons for each referral included concerns relating to tardiness, disruptive behavior (i.e. talking, inattentiveness or lack of student preparation). Other areas for referral documented aggressive and intimidating behavior in the hallway or on the playground, fighting, stealing, drugs, gang activity and whether a weapon was involved in any incident.

Tentative results indicate that there are significant differences between small rural and large urban middle and junior high schools. These differences relate to the number, types, frequency, depth and seriousness, time required for reaching a resolution to the problem, and the repetitive nature of individual referrals. In the six urban schools involved in the study, there were 2,245 separate discipline referrals reported during the five week period. For every 100 students in the urban schools, there were twenty-five referrals. By contrast, there were only 16 referrals for every 100 students. As each referral was brought to the attention of the administrator, the form documented who was involved, what happened, and where the problem occurred.

The profiles comparing urban and rural schools provide an interesting contrast. The following tables (see enclosed copies of transparencies) summarize differences as well as similarities. Although some would expect that some similarities should instead reveal differences, or other differences should reveal similarities, this was not always the case. There were explanations from those administrators that offer explanations for these surprises. Significant differences and similarities are revealed in the summary data and explanations provided through the presentation.

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

- Student Referral Form:
  - Who made referral: ____ Male ____ Female
    - ____ Teacher (name)
    - ____ Administrator
    - ____ Service Agency
    - ____ Staff Member
    - ____ Parent in Community
    - ____ Other

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

- Time of Offense:
  - ___ A.M. ___ Noon ___ P.M. ___ After School
- Location of Offense
  - ___ Classroom ___ Cafeteria
  - ___ Off Campus ___ Hallway
  - ___ Playground ___ Other _____

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

- Reason for Referral:
  - ___ Tardiness, Sluffing
  - ___ Classroom disruptive behavior (talking, inattentive, not prepared, etc.)
  - Aggressive/Intimidating Behavior
    - ___ Toward Student (Bullying)
    - ___ Toward Teacher or Other Adult
  - ___ Fighting ___ Vandalism ___ Stealing
  - ___ Drugs ___ Gang Activity ___
  - ___ Weapon involved ___ Type of Weapon _____
  - ___ Other _____

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

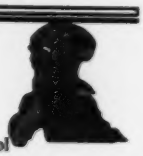
- Action Taken by Administrator:
  - Interaction Taken:
    - Conference With Student — Time Taken _____
    - Conference With Parent — Time Taken _____
    - Conference with other administrator, teacher, counselor, etc. — Time Taken _____
    - Phone Call to Parent or Guardian — Time Taken _____

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

- Action Taken by Administrator:
  - Interaction Taken:
    - ___ Conference With Social Service Agency — Time Taken _____
    - ___ Conference With Social Service Agency — Time Taken _____
    - ___ Phone Call to Social Service Agency or Police Authority — Time Taken _____
    - ___ Admin. Required to Leave Campus for Meeting or Conferen — Time Taken _____

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

- Policy Followed:
  - ___ Oral Reprimand
  - ___ Parent Required to Come to School
  - ___ Referral to Police or Correctional System
  - ___ Notice to Teachers of Intervention and Student Returned to Class
  - ___ Sit in Office for Period of Time



Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

- Policy Followed:
  - ___ Assigned In-School Suspension (During or After School)
  - ___ Home Suspension Length of Time _____
  - ___ District Referral for Transfer
  - ___ Expulsion Request of District
  - Other _____
  - _____ Approximate Time Spent with Incident (Hours and Minutes)

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

Student Gender:	Urban	Rural
Male	72.9%	72.9%
Female	27.1%	27.1%
Person Making Referral:	**Urban**	**Rural**
Teacher	54.7%	54.1%
Administrator	20.3%	22.8%
Staff	6.7%	7.4%

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

Time of Offense:	Urban	Rural
A.M.	48.5%	55.1%
Lunch	12.6%	11.4%
P.M.	34.5%	28.6%
After School	3.0%	2.0%
Combination	1.1%	2.9%

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

Reason for Referral:	Urban	Rural
Class Disruption	24.7%	36.5%
Hall Disruption	5.7%	4.8%
Aggressive/Intimidating	12.3%	12.4%
Toward Student	72.4%	82.9%
Toward Teacher	27.6%	17.1%
Fighting	5.2%	7.9%
Drugs	1.5%	1.4%
Gang Activity	.4%	0 .6%

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

Reason for Referral:	Urban	Rural
Stealing	2.5%	3.9%
Tardiness/Sluffing	33.8%	14.3%
Vandalism	2.5%	2.2%
Weapon Involved	.4%	.3%
Positive Reinforcement	5.2%	6.1%
Other Reason Not Listed	19.8%	22.8%

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

Action Taken:	Urban	Rural
Call Parent/Guardian	25.5%	38.9%
Conference With Parent or Guardian	9.6%	10.2%
Conference With Administrator - Teacher	8.2%	17.4%
Call Social Service or Police	1.1%	2.2%
Conference With Police - County Authority	4.1%	7.8%

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

► Action Taken:	Urban	Rural
► Conference With Social Services	.3%	.8%
► Conference W/Student	94.7%	97.8%
► Leave School for Meeting or Conference	.5%	1.1%

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

Location of Referral:	Urban	Rural
► Bus	.9%	.7%
► Cafeteria	3.0%	1.0%
► Classroom	59.4%	65.5%
► Hallway	21.5%	24.3%
► Off-Campus	6.4%	5.6%
► Another Location	7.5%	3.0%
► Playground	3.8%	3.6%

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

► Teacher Referrals:	Urban	Rural
► Refer	68%	36%
► Never refer	32%	64%
► Ten Percent	39%	58%
► Gender		
► Male	46%	50%
► Female	54%	50%

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

► Time per case	Urban	Rural
► Average	13 min.	24 min.
► Conf. with Student	8.9 min.	13.2 min.
► Conf. with Parent	13.8 min.	21.0 min.
► Call a Parent	4.9 min.	6.0 min.
► Conf. with Admin.	12.6 min.	12.3 min.
► Conf. S.S. Agency	13.8 min.	20.3 min.
► Call S.S. Agency	21.0 min.	9.6 min.
► Conf. with police	13.2 min.	21.8 min.
► Leave school	54.8 min.	26.3 min.
► Total time per day	3.3 hours	0.9 hours

Patterns of Discipline: A Contrast Between Urban and Rural Schools

	Urban	Rural
► Average enrollment	1354.0	395.0
► Average referals per day	14.9	2.4
► Referrals per hundred students	28.0	15.0